

DEPARTMENTS OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND INDEPENDENT AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 1999

SPEECH OF

**HON. MICHAEL F. DOYLE**

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, July 29, 1998*

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 4194) making appropriations for the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and for sundry independent agencies, boards, commissions, corporations, and offices for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1999, and for other purposes:

Mr. DOYLE. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in support of the brownfields redevelopment initiative and the Frelinghuysen-Stokes-DeGette amendment which seeks to eliminate the bill's restrictions on the use of EPA funds for brownfields cleanups. The bill prohibits brownfields funds from being used by localities to set up a revolving loan fund program. In addition, the bill also prohibits brownfields funds from being used for research, technical assistance, education and community outreach.

As a lifelong resident of Pittsburgh, I have seen our region go through many changes. When I was growing up, we were a thriving industrial center. There were plenty of good jobs to be had. These jobs weren't glamorous, but they paid well and families in the region knew there was always going to be an opportunity for their children to earn a good living in the area.

About the time I went to college in the early and mid-70's, the economic dynamics began to change. The global competitiveness of U.S. heavy industry began to fade. Our domestic economic focus began to shift from manufacturing to the service industry. This meant hard times for older industrial areas in Pittsburgh. As a result, many of these industrial sites like Homestead, McKeesport, and Duquesne lie abandoned or under used.

I am proud of the brownfields initiative, as it provides much-needed economic stimulus without erecting a massive government program. Instead the program encourages public-private partnerships that can work efficiently to revitalize our economy. We need to make sure that the federal government is working with these private partnerships, not against it.

In my state, there are several programs that are designed to foster private-public partnerships and help turn brownfields into viable properties. For example the Industrial Sites Reuse Program and Infrastructure Development Program are both financing programs that are targeted to brownfields sites, in which Pennsylvania has their fair share.

In fact, many local volunteers, service organizations and non-profit groups in conjunction with community leaders in Pennsylvania have begun to volunteer their time and have started cleaning up these sites. In addition, local governments are working with private companies in offering them incentives, like tax credits, in order for them to move into these reclaimed brownfields. In Pennsylvania, these programs are gaining momentum and that is why it is crucial that we continue to fund this viable program.

We have one of the most important economic development tools in the brownfields program. The program authorizes money to be used for outreach, clean up, technical assistance and research that will stimulate and return these sites for industrial use. Once these sites are cleaned up, new businesses looking to relocate in our region will find it much more feasible and attractive.

As some of my colleagues will recall, in the early version of H.R. 2014, the Taxpayer Relief Act of 1997, there was no language dealing with brownfields redevelopment nor expanding the number of Empowerment Zones. So I decided to lead a bipartisan effort to rally for this language to be inserted in the final version of H.R. 2014. Thanks to our hard work the brownfields funding and the Empowerment Zone program were expanded and now more communities can take advantage of these two programs.

A vote against the Frelinghuysen-Stokes-DeGette Amendment will discourage these partnerships and send our communities the wrong message. A vote for this Amendment will ensure our communities that the federal government is committed to reclaiming and utilizing our abandoned industrial sites. I urge my colleagues to vote yes on the Frelinghuysen-Stokes-DeGette Amendment, and I yield back the balance of my time.

DEPARTMENTS OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND INDEPENDENT AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 1999

SPEECH OF

**HON. CARLOS A. ROMERO-BARCELÓ**

OF PUERTO RICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, July 29, 1998*

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 4194) making appropriations for the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and for sundry independent agencies, boards, commissions, corporations, and offices for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1999, and for other purposes:

Mr. ROMERO-BARCELÓ. Mr. Chairman, today, the House of Representatives is considering the VA-HUD appropriations bill. An amendment was presented—and defeated—on the floor of the House that would have prevented the Veterans Administration from implementing and administering the Veterans Equitable Resource Allocation System, commonly known as VERA.

I opposed this amendment because the American veterans in Puerto Rico deserve to be treated fairly and equitably. Our Nation has a moral obligation to fulfill our promises to the men and women who have patriotically defended our democracy and the very values that enable us to enjoy our freedom, liberties and rights. Puerto Rico already has one of the largest veterans populations nationwide. In the past we have been shortchanged in the allocation of resources; a failure that has discriminated against the very men and women who deserve our utmost respect.

As Congress continues to cut funding for veterans programs, we must look to the best

way to maximize the available resources so that all veterans nationwide are treated equally and fairly. This is what VERA does. This innovative VA program provides a more efficient and effective allocation of resources that considers workload and demand, promotes a better labor-patient mix and supports research and education funding per patient. The end result is a more equitable distribution of much needed funds that takes into account population shifts in the provision of quality health care to our Nation's veterans.

I salute my colleagues in the House of Representatives for considering the needs of American veterans and in particular their support for the veterans in Puerto Rico. It is our responsibility and duty to provide our veterans the quality care they have so valiantly earned in a prompt, respectful and courteous manner. We need to keep our promises.

A HUMAN RIGHTS PERSPECTIVE ON A VISIT TO ALGERIA AND EGYPT

**HON. FRANK R. WOLF**

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, July 30, 1998*

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, over the July recess, I traveled to Algeria and Egypt on official business to learn about the human rights problems in both countries.

In Algeria, I met with government officials, parliamentary leaders and representatives of non-government organizations. I also had the opportunity to visit the sites of a recent massacre to talk with individuals who lost loved ones to terrorism. Encouraging political reform, pluralism, rule of law and democracy may help bring an end to the conflict.

In Egypt, I met with government officials, Coptic Christians and others to discuss human rights abuses and the problems facing Christians living in Egypt.

I submit here the report of my trip to share with our colleagues.

REPORT OF A VISIT TO ALGERIA AND EGYPT: A HUMAN RIGHTS PERSPECTIVE

(This report provides details of my trip to northern Africa during the period July 5-10, 1998. This visit included a two-day stop in Algiers (July 6-8) followed by a two-day visit to Cairo (July 8-10). The relatively short traveling time between Algiers and Cairo afforded the opportunity for back-to-back visits. Algeria is rampant with terrorism which is largely unreported to the outside world. Nearby Cairo afforded the opportunity to meet with and see in their homeland Coptic Christians and to develop a broader perspective of human rights conditions there.)

I have, for several years, followed events in Algeria and have a growing concern about the terrible toll on human life that ongoing, unabated terrorism and the government's response to it are having in this violent land.

Algeria has deep roots in history. Saint Augustine (354-430), one of the greatest leaders of the early Christian Church and the author of Confessions, one of the first great autobiographies, was born in the city of Tagaste, near what is now Constantine, in the northeast corner of Algeria.

In 1815, a U.S. Naval Squadron under Captain Stephen Decatur attacked Algiers and forced its governor to sign a treaty banning piracy against American ships. Continuing piracy on European shipping led ultimately